

4. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities and services provide for the day-to-day needs of the village. They include services which affect the health, safety, and well-being of area residents and businesses. Some are an absolute necessity, while others are highly desirable. All are key factors in the overall quality of life in the village and must be adequately provided for in the future.

This chapter reviews the existing system of community facilities, discusses key issues involved in planning for future facilities and services and presents the recommended Community Facilities Plan.

EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Panama provides several community services directly to local residents, including water and sewer service, parks and recreational facilities, and fire protection (see Map 8). Other services--like schools and electricity--are provided by outside agencies. Still others--like hospital services--must be obtained in Lincoln.

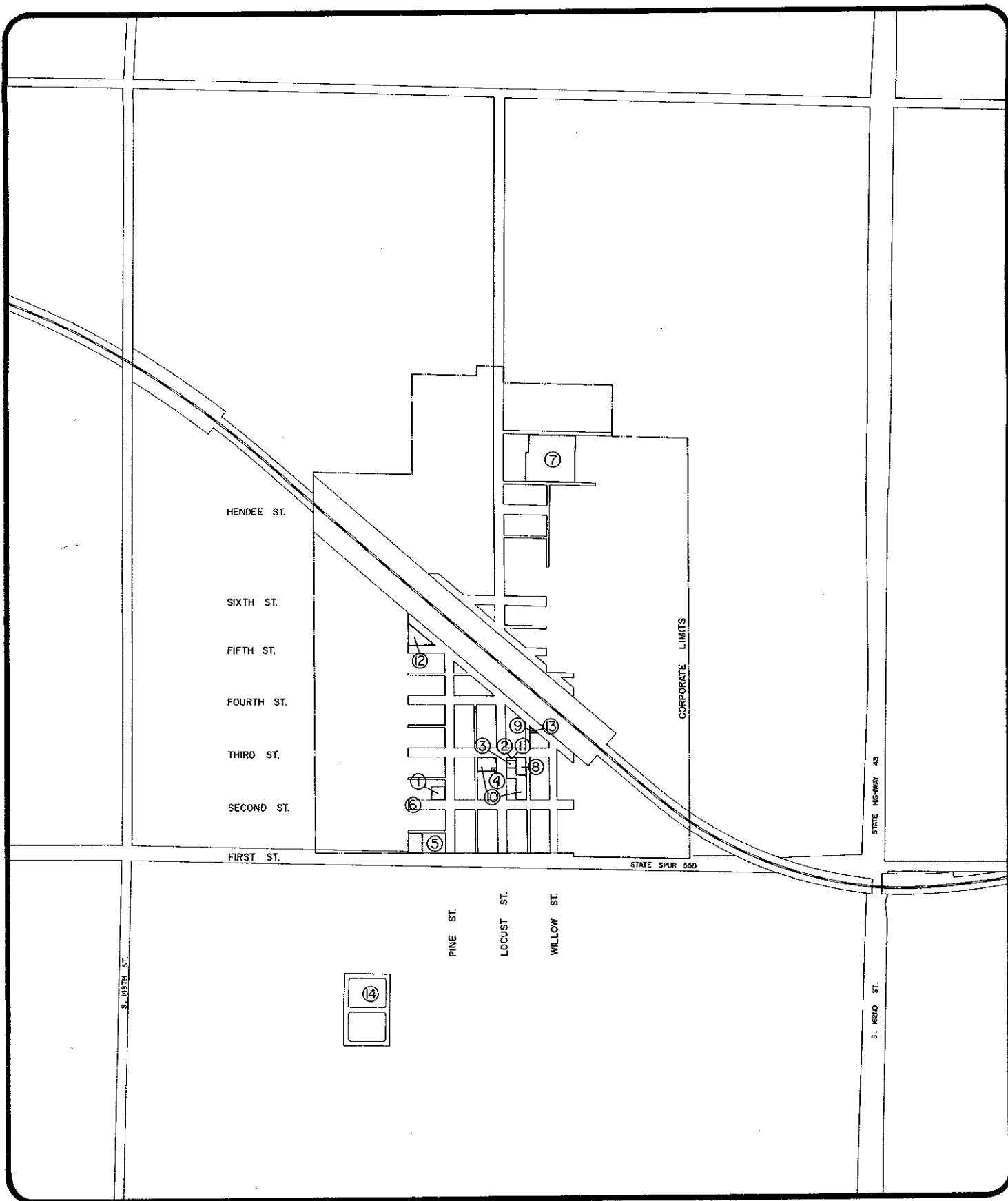
Several of the most important locally-based community facilities are discussed below.

Water

The village operates a central pressurized water system supplied by a main well north of the community, supplementary wells west of Second Street extended, and an underground storage tank south of the railroad. In 1975, the village contracted with Rural Water District 1, which also serves Bennet, Cheney, Martell, and numerous scattered rural families, for supplementary water support.

Sewer Facilities

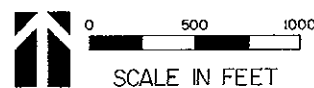
The village operates a central waste water collection and treatment system, with main six-inch trunk lines along Pine Street, the alleyways east and west of Locust Street, and Locust Street north of the railroad line.



EXISTING FACILITIES

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| ① PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | ⑧ TENNIS COURT |
| ② POST OFFICE | ⑨ WATER STORAGE TANK |
| ③ FIRE STATION | ⑩ PARKS |
| ④ TELEPHONE BUILDING | ⑪ TOWN HALL |
| ⑤ COUNTY MAINTENANCE | ⑫ SOLID WASTE COLLECTION SITE |
| ⑥ WATER WELLS | ⑬ TOWN MAINTENANCE SHED |
| ⑦ BALL FIELD | ⑭ SEWAGE LAGOONS |

PANAMA, NEBRASKA COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN



8

The treatment point for the system is a sewage lagoon south of State Spur 55D.

Solid Waste Disposal

Panama participates in the county-assisted "green box" solid waste disposal demonstration project begun in 1974. Waste is deposited in a central collection facility, located on Fifth Street, south of the railroad. Waste is then hauled to the Lincoln sanitary landfill site for disposal.

The county currently is sponsoring an area-wide study on the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of solid waste disposal. At present, the "green box" system is apparently working well in Panama and the central collection site is adequate. The future of the system is uncertain.

Parks and Recreation

Panama maintains three public park sites totaling approximately 3.4 acres: the *ballfield*, located in the northeast corner of the village, which contains a ball diamond and backstop; *Kiddieland Park*, located west of Locust in the Village Center, which contains a small swing set; and *Town Hall Park*, located east of Locust in the Village Center, which contains a tennis court and picnic facilities. The village is also considering the purchase of two acres adjoining the ballfield for future expansion to the east.

Fire Protection

Panama has an agreement with the Firth Fire Protection District whereby the district provides firefighting equipment and the village provides volunteer firemen and a fire station facility. The local fire station, located on the east side of Locust Street adjacent to the Town Hall, is a one-bay metal structure approximately 15 years old. It is one of two stations in the Firth District, which includes a large service area extending into two counties. Most calls are in response to brush fires in rural areas.

Post Office and Town Hall

The Post Office and Town Hall are located on the southeast corner of Locust and Third Streets. While the facilities are central to the community, the Town Hall structure is becoming obsolete. Space is limited, especially for public meetings and gatherings.

County Road Maintenance Garage

The County Surveyor operates a road maintenance garage on State Spur 55D at the southwest corner of the village. The county is considering consolidation of the highway maintenance function at a few central sites, and the future of the Panama garage is uncertain.

The presence of such a facility within the village offers certain advantages to local residents. If its county function is phased out, the village should consider acquiring and reusing the site for either a municipal service facility or future fire station.

Health Services

No health services or facilities are provided within the village. A dentist once practiced in Panama, and the community's last physician died in the late 1950s. The County Health Department operates a program whereby public health nurses visit rural communities on a regular basis. Nurses do not make scheduled visits to Panama but are present one day a month in the nearby communities of Hickman, Bennet, and Firth. Nurses will make special visits to invalids.

Although a local doctor would be highly desirable, small communities throughout the country are experiencing more difficulty attracting physicians. Therefore, the village should carefully monitor and attempt to capitalize on the progressive health care programs of the county health department.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES ISSUES

Lincoln will continue to provide for many of the community facility needs of Panama residents. However, new growth and development will place pressure on local facilities and services. Certain existing facilities will need to be upgraded or expanded, and new facilities will be needed. Several key issues involved in meeting future community facility requirements are discussed below.

Future Water Service

Growth will increase demands for water service. However, it should be possible to serve the residential infill areas called for in the Land-use Plan with minor extensions to the existing water distribution system without major improvements to the primary trunk lines. Major public expenditures for new water facilities should not be required until the larger long-range development sectors are developed.

At present, the system of water wells, storage tank, and water district support service appears adequate for the planning period.

Future Sanitary Sewer Service

Growth will also increase demands for sanitary sewer service. Since local soils are not suitable for septic fields, growth areas must be served by the centralized system. Also, if new development occurs on lands too low in elevation, it cannot be served by the existing trunk lines of the gravity flow collection system. Therefore, if new residential growth occurs very far east or west of the presently built-up area, major new sewer improvements will be required.

The Land-use Plan promotes residential development immediately adjacent to the village, which could be served by minor extensions to the existing sewer system. Major expenditures to upgrade sewer line facilities should not be required until long-range residential sectors are developed. The existing sewage lagoon with a design flow of 16,000 gallons per day,⁴ will not be adequate to serve the target population. The treatment facility will need upgrading. Land is available at the existing site for expansion.

Parks and Recreation

New recreational lands and facilities will be required to serve the target population. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission recommends that rural communities maintain at least 2.5 acres of parkland per 100 population. Since Panama currently has 3.4 acres and is considering the purchase of 2.0 new acres, at least one additional acre will be needed to meet minimum recreational requirements. However, since local residents consider this service quite important, Panama will likely want to do more than simply satisfy minimum standards.

The village has a unique recreational opportunity. The two existing stream beds east and west of the community have considerable potential as future recreational open space. If preserved and improved, these could create an open space corridor encircling the village, ideal for hiking, biking, and passive recreation. This would not only complement existing park activities and preserve most remaining tree masses, but would also create an attractive visual feature for the community. The village has designated the eastern corridor as high-priority recreational land.

New recreational facilities will also be needed within existing parks. The village should continue its improvement program at the ball-field: bleachers are being built, lights are on order, and plans call for expansion of the site to the east. Kiddieland Park should be more intensively developed as a local playground. Town Hall Park should be landscaped and developed, perhaps with facilities for senior citizens, and with a public meeting area within or adjacent to it. The village is

⁴"Nemaha River Basin Water Quality Management Plan," January 1976.

currently considering a small shelter with kitchen and restroom facilities for this site.

Storm Drainage

The village will have to consider the adequate provision for storm drainage. A system of curb and gutter, curb inlets, enclosed storm drainage, and open storm drainage in those areas shown as parks and open space on the Land-use Plan would be desirable. The use of the two intermittent street corridors as parks will also help preserve their storm drainage function.

Fire Station

Although the existing fire station is in good condition, its central location has certain disadvantages. It is not adjacent to regional roadways, and fire vehicles must pass through the village in order to reach them. Egress of vehicles directly onto the main street at the center of community activities can be dangerous. The station is small and will be inadequate if new equipment--such as rescue facilities--are added in the future. Expansion at the existing site will be difficult.

The village has considered possible relocation alternatives. A site near the existing county maintenance facility adjacent to State Spur 55D would have a number of advantages. However, this location would be less central to the volunteer firemen, most of whom work in the Village Center. Also, volunteer stations serve certain social functions and would benefit from a location closer to the Village Center. The preferred alternative is maintenance of the fire station within or adjacent to the Village Center, but with improved safety, perhaps through the use of warning or stop lights activated for emergency vehicles entering Locust Street.

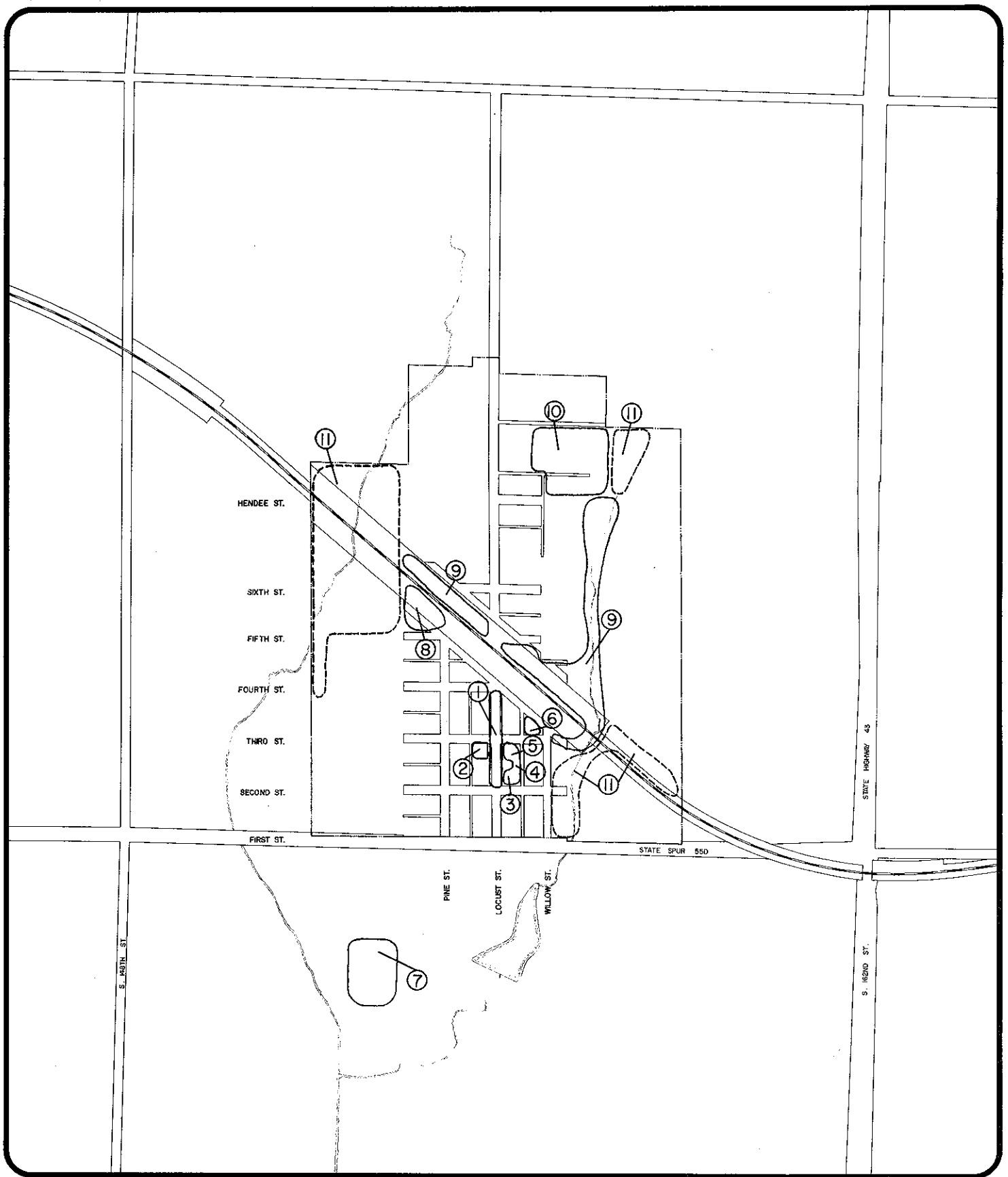
Public Meeting Space

Although the Panama Presbyterian Church fulfills many public meeting facility needs, the village should consider the provision of new public gathering space within the Village Center. Existing space in the Town Hall is becoming inadequate.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

The Community Facilities Plan is illustrated in Map 9. It indicates the location and distribution of the major public facilities which will be required to serve the year 2000 target population.

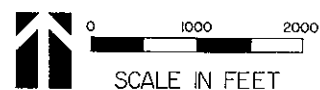
Water and sewer facilities will require only minor extensions to serve the recommended Land-use Plan; major improvements will be required when long-range outlying residential sectors are developed. All



FACILITIES PLAN

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| ① PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS | ⑦ SEWAGE TREATMENT |
| ② PLAYGROUND | ⑧ NEW PARK |
| ③ TOWN HALL PARK | ⑨ CORRIDOR PARK |
| ④ EXPANDED FIRE STATION | ⑩ EXPANDED BALLFIELD |
| ⑤ NEW COMMUNITY BUILDING | ⑪ LONG-RANGE PARK |
| ⑥ VILLAGE MAINTENANCE | |

PANAMA, NEBRASKA COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN



9

existing public park sites will be improved with new recreational facilities. A major new linear park site is designated along the stream bed east of the village between the ballfield and rail line. This linear park corridor would be extended south of the railroad and west of the village when outlying sectors are developed. A new community building and fire station are indicated within the Village Center. These facilities would be provided in a single new structure combining a new or expanded fire station, public meeting space, clerk's office and perhaps space for the post office. The future of the county maintenance garage and "green box" solid waste collection site depends upon decisions outside the village. If abandoned, the sites should be retained for public use; the solid waste collection site for a new park.